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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1447
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 4225
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2037
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1902
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2473
RHMFISS/CDR USCENCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2831

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 001144

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN
AID/W FOR EE/EA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/29/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [KJUS](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION A LIKELY
CASUALTY TO GEORGIA CONFLICT

Classified By: Charge Sylvia Reed Curran for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) It appears that the Turkmen may have decided against participation in a conference sponsored by a USAID implementing partner in order to avoid unwanted pressure from Russia. USAID sent an invitation for one representative from the Ministry of Education and one from the Institute for Democracy and Human Rights (IDHR) to participate in the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law's (ICNL) conference on teaching NGO law courses in law schools and universities in Kiev in September. Until August 27, MFA had indicated that participation likely would be approved. IDHR has repeatedly stated how highly it values cooperation with USAID and with ICNL. Suddenly, on August 27 MFA informed USAID that Turkmen participation in the conference would not be possible. USAID FSNs immediately suspected that the Georgian conflict might be the reason.

¶2. (C) MFA confirmed unofficially August 29 that this was not the right time for Turkmen officials to participate in a conference on NGOs in Kiev, because it would lead to unwanted comments from "a certain country." The MFA contact also said that the "certain country" has been stressing to the Turkmen that cooperation with the United States has little value, because such cooperation always has a "hidden agenda."

¶3. (C) COMMENT: The Turkmen scrupulously hold on to their neutrality and do not want to be in the middle of a conflict between other countries. This is why Turkmenistan will never take a position that overtly supports Russia in the conflict. Furthermore, Turkmenistan continues to value cooperation and assistance from the United States. Our programs with the Turkmen will continue to expand. They really do see value not just in cooperation with our country, but in the entire bilateral relationship. Nevertheless, they will likely try to avoid activities that they may feel are too "high-profile" and would lead to added pressure. Unfortunately, seminars in Ukraine on NGOs fit that bill.

CURRAN